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Direct Action

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breaking barriers boundaries borders

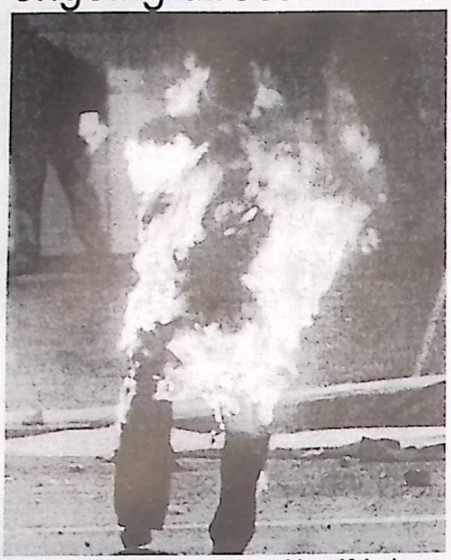
nation states
undoing the jigsaw

feminism
the fight to be human

200 million child slaves: welcome to 1997

wouldn't cover

ongoing direct actions around the world



Korean striker sets alight to himself during a strikers' demonstration

~~korea~~

When was the last time a western trade union blatantly ignored threats on its savings and legality, and mobilised tens of thousands in the streets? The new laws in Korea designed blatantly to undermine employment rights have been justified on the basis that without them, there is the threat of business and jobs moving to South Wales, where labour costs are cheaper and there is more 'flexibility' in the workforce (sound familiar?). The resistance to the austere Korean regime is remarkable. And it isn't over yet; the; 'final wave' promises yet more street presence and direct action.

~~nicaragua~~

The expected signing in Nicaragua of the first union contract in the Free Trade Zone, where over 10,000 workers make clothing and other products for the export market, was derailed at the last minute in late February. The owners of the clothing company 'Fortex Industrial' refused to recognise the union as such despite legal requirements and the fact that it has already been recognised by the Labor Ministry. The latter has tried to avoid enforcing the law by advising the company and the 'union' to sort it out themselves. Send a fax outlining the above and demanding the ministry ensures the union gets full union recognition as the law requires: 011-505-228-2103. (Send SAE for more info. from DA).

~~france~~

Lyon's anarchist bookshop, La Plume Noire, was burnt down in February, on the day before the French anarchist newspaper Le Monde Libertaire was to go on trial against the leader of the national front (FN), Jean-Marie Le Pen. The fascist youth wing of Le Pen's party , which is closely modelled on the Hitler Youth, had attacked the shop the night before, but this time apparently attempted to murder the occupants by setting alight to the escape doorways in the process of burning the shop. The current centre-right government as well as their predecessors the socialists have been particularly complicit in the recent rise of fascism in France. By saying the FN has 'bad solutions to good questions' they have allowed the fascists to set the tone of the debate; in introducing ever more xenophobic laws they both hoped to steal the FN's thunder.

The anarchists in Lyon are in the front line; send messages and money to:
La Plume Noire, 19, rue Pierre Blanc,
69001 LYON, FRANCE.

~~france again~~

Jubilant truckers lifted the barricades on Nov. 29th to end the 12-day siege of France after forcing the government to accept a settlement giving them most of what they wanted. The 12-day conflict caused chaos on both sides of the English Channel as the strikers blocked roads, ports, oil refineries and fuel depots, forcing factories to close and disrupting commerce. As a result. truckers will be allowed to retire at the age of 55, will receive an extra five day per year in sick pay, cannot be required to work Sundays and will be paid for time spent waiting and resting.

French employers fear the successful strike will embolden other workers to fight for better conditions and undercut the government's austerity program, especially since this was the third time in four years that determined strikers forced a French conservative government to retreat. Such fear is a pretty good sign that the action hit the right spot.

~~20th Congress~~

The 20th Congress of the International Workers' Association since it was formed in 1922 was held in December 1996 in Madrid, Spain. Debates covered a wide range of topics, and there is no space here to do it justice, except to say that the IWA is growing rapidly, and several new sections joined. So...**welcome:**

CRAS (CIS)
BKT (Bulgaria)
ASAUL (Portugal)
ORGANISE! (Ireland:
PO Box 505, Belfast BT12 6BQ)
AWARENESS LEAGUE (Nigeria)
ASF (Czech Republic)
SOLIDAD OBRERA (Chile)
ALAS DE XUE (Columbia)
PRO-IWA (Canada)

We must never set ourselves up as omniscient claiming to know what is best for people, we can only point out the dangers involved by analysing what they have experienced and clarify the intrinsic principles involved, as we collectively see it.

But we aim at a successful complete and absolute social revolution which means we must not be emotively motivated in our actions if we are to win and bring about a complete transformation of society. Our policy must be not only be logical, it must be both mature and realist.

With fraternal greetings to fellow anarcho-syndicalists.

Aberystwyth IWW

Act-back

DA,

From the late 19th century to the 1970s, leading capitalist nations felt the need to provide large-scale welfare services for the working class. This was not an epidemic of humanitarianism striking ruling classes but was necessary to provide the healthy, skilled workforce then essential for capitalism's economic expansion and to fight its wars as well as appease this workforce, which often became militant. Since the 1970s new technology has made it possible to reduce the economic need for skilled as well as unskilled labour with the result that more and more of the population of the rich 'developed' countries along with the 'developing' world is surplus to requirements.

The bosses are not (yet) able to dispose of us like a farmer slaughtering surplus livestock, but, by cutting back on unprofitable and undesirable welfare services, they encourage us to turn on ourselves and each other. Replacing the community and family is a frightened, fractured and isolated society, distracted by the capitalist media's consumer culture. The result is rising crime and a demand for increased 'law and order' which the capitalists, whose activities deliberately produced this result, are ready to cynically exploit with more police, prisons and laws, providing a profitable growth industry and an excuse to strengthen their apparatus of repression now that the old excuse of the 'red menace' has disappeared.

Talk of the working class is a delusion. The majority of the population of the developed world is middle class. They enjoy a materially privileged lifestyle compared to the world's impoverished majority and so have a vested interest in preserving the system that supplies these privileges (at least so long as they last). There is a large and growing underclass -long term unemployed, low paid, pensioners, single parents etc..- who have no material stake in the system. Our interest is extracting as much as possible from the rest of society, used as scapegoats and a threat to keep the majority in line, we are the key to the system's destruction.

We cannot be mobilised by any party or organisation or the preaching of obsolete ideals like solidarity, humanity and similar sentimental drivel. What is needed is a mass-campaign. If successful this would greatly reduce the effect of capitalism's strongest industrial weapon (the threat of the dole) and restore the possibility of industrial militancy. It could also have a healthy political effect by greatly reducing the privileges of the middle class, pro-capitalist majority.

ED; I don't usually comment but couldn't resist. I like the initial analysis, but got lost between the anti-organisation and the mass campaign. Won't this require organisation -i.e. revolutionary anarchist organisations strong enough to repel reformist opportunists - or surely it will fade away like anti-poll tax groups did? For certain, the 'underclass' is essential in the struggle, but with workers or else it will be further marginalised, no? As for the 'middle class', what is it? Aren't these just bosses lackeys and workers duped into capitalism, whether in the office or factory? A revolution needs massive support amongst both wage-earners and other working class people; a bigger and more united movement than ever before. Surely we need to be building links; and breaking barriers, not making them.

about letters

Readers' letters are welcome, feel free to write in. However, we get a lot of correspondence; if you want your views aired here, mark your correspondence 'letters'. Try to keep them brief and to the point. We can only print within space permitting, and reserve the right to chop bits on longer or less coherent material. All letters are kept and so full versions are available from us at DA.

Send your letters to:

DA-SF (letters), PO Box 1095, Sheffield S2 4YR

FAQs

..cont'd from page 23

vessel with water (highly unoriginal thoughts I should add, paraphrased from writings of the Enlightenment and classical liberalism). These are general principles, which I think are generally valid. How they apply in particular circumstances has to be evaluated case by case, with due humility, and recognition of how little we really understand.

Chomsky's thoughts regarding a future society (as expressed by letter to Tom Lane):

About a future society, I...may be repeating, but it's something I've been concerned with every since I was a kid. I recall, about 1940, reading Diego Abad de Santillan's interesting book After the Revolution, criticizing his anarchist comrades and sketching in some detail how an anarcho-syndicalist Spain would work (these are >50 year old memories, so don't take it too literally). My feeling then was that it looked good, but do we understand enough to answer questions about a society in such detail? Over the years, naturally I've learned more, but it has only deepened my skepticism about whether we understand enough. In recent years, I've discussed this a good deal with Mike Albert, who has been encouraging me to spell out in detail how I think society should work, or at least react to his "participatory democracy" conception. I've backed off, in both cases, for the same reasons. It seems to me that answers to most such questions have to be learned by experiment. Take markets (to the extent that they could function in any viable society -- limited, if the historical record is any guide, not to speak of logic). I understand well enough what's wrong with them, but that's not sufficient to demonstrate that a system that eliminates market operations is preferable; simply a point of logic, and I don't think we know the answer. Same with everything else.

wooo wwooo noises over the top at what seems random moments. This is what happens when you let Goths near a recording studio after several too many cider and blacks. Pitchshifter and Pap Brittle go for a spot of industrial metal which falls just the right side of the line to funk metal (i.e. the side away from it). Sort of like the Twenty Fifth of May or early Blaggers ITA, but not enough like RevCo. Talking of the Blaggers ITA here they are with 'there's gonna be a lynchin'. What's happened, no horns, no samples no mixing no fun, just, yet, another guitar, bass, drums shouty vocals band.

Of the rest Bjorn Baby Bjorn do a fax copy of one of Abba's greatest moments 'Waterloo' (it's a bit fuzzy round the edges), the Wild Bouquet are one for the older listeners, dull Eric Clapton-ish without the guitar histrionics and with top cheesy organ riffs. Let me hear you say YEAH! for top cheesy organ riffs! Big Ray are probably the band most likely in that they sound a bit B***pop. To be more precise, like Blur without the irritating Mockney chirpings. Wayne Kramer is Blue Öyster Cult and I claim my cuddly Buck Dharma.

The last track is by Propaghandi, which I thought was a split from Fun-da-mental, but it's not them, shame. It is some Canadians doing that happy guitar punk that Canadians do so well (the 'phone message at the beginning and end mentions Hannah, no relations to the ex- Subhumans bloke??). Well being a Canadian punk band and being at the end, they made me think of Nomeansno, and so I put on some Nomeansno and reflected that if all bands sounded like them I'd be very much further in debt than I already am.

Positive points: only one really bad track, and that fails through trying too hard; a few rather fine tracks and lots of okay ones; if you have a CD-ROM wotsit you can peruse the AK Press catalogue. I like compilations; excellent cover art with lots of ardent Chinese communists clutching AK Press to their hearts; and, it prints the quote "If I can't dance, it's not my revolution" (Emma Goldman) on the sleeve, my very favourite quote.

excellent cover art with lots of ardent Chinese communists clutching AK Press to their hearts

Luddgang

Gig at the Devonshire
November, 1996

Oi Polloi didn't turn up so the support had to do the whole show. Being as it was their first gig not many people had much idea of what the support were going to do. They were here to see good old Oi Polloi. So what happened next came as a bit of a surprise.

The music? Test Department meets Crass is miles away but I can't seem to get any nearer. The part of the 'gang who are on stage do tribal drumming to astonishingly intense backing tracks and video/slide screen images, presumably operated by the part of the 'gang stageside.

As you might expect, 5 drummers is loud. Also as you might expect, Luddgang use less orthodox 'instruments' and metal-ish implements to hit in addition to the obligatory bass, big toms and snare. Beer barrels, tin cans and a range of assorted acoustic metal-ware is as precise as I can get.

Luddgang present a serious, class struggle anarchist image. No fooling about dancing gaily 'till the revolution happens. The video and audio clips cover everything from American Presidents to Bosnia to Poll Tax, the list is endless. None of it leaves you in any doubt who the enemy is.

But there's more. The call to action is clear as a stick splitting a plastic skin. You get a free magazine. The message cuts through the rough edges, noise, attitude and anger. If this doesn't make you angry you aren't human. If it doesn't make you at least think about doing something about the state we are all in, you are hopeless. Luddgang, not surprisingly, consists of active anarchists and anarcho-syndicalists, and this is a call to the barricades.

There are plans for a no-profit pack of audio-visual and printed matter with T-shirt no less. Enquire about it if you cannot get to one of their gigs (Luddgang, PO Box 446, Sheffield S1 1NY, UK). Otherwise, do yourself a favour and see them live.

I Shot Andy Warhol

Dir. Mary Harron
1996

I only read the SCUM Manifesto earlier in the year and was somewhat confused about it. It's a well-written piece, mainly, which contains some unpalatable ideas and, in places, some seemingly wild inaccuracies. Maybe it is because I am more used to such vitriolic hatred of one gender for another coming from men? Whatever it was, I was interested to know more about the woman who wrote it. So when this film came out about Valerie Solanas I was quite keen. A chance to find out something about the woman who wrote SCUM, why she wrote it and how she herself interpreted it. Anyway, I wanted to know more than just that she shot Andy Warhol.

The film in itself is fine, by no means brilliant, and the acting gets a bit wobbly in places, but no worse than your average soap or many other low

budget movies. The film portrays Solanas (played by a chain smoking Lili Taylor, if she gets cancer she should sue Mary Harron) as a radical lesbian who came from a background of abuse. As an outstanding student, she funded her way through college by prostitution, then going on to live rough on the streets of New York. Apparently determined not to get any of the usual jobs, she survived by getting money on the street. Through her friendship with drag queen Candy Darling, she meets Andy Warhol's crowd and begins hanging around on the edge of it trying to persuade Warhol to produce her play. When he doesn't and she gets ripped off by her publisher, she becomes convinced that the pair of them are out to publish the play without her. It is perhaps her descent into insanity which is the weakest part of the film. It seems far too rushed. The titles at the end of the film tell us that Solanas died of pneumonia out on the streets years after being released from the institutions to which she was sent when she was convicted and declared to be mentally ill.

as an outstanding student, she funded her way through college by prostitution, then going on to live rough on the streets of New York

Solanas is shown at one point watching a news report of a feminist demonstration and it's implied that she was almost unaware of a wider movement. She did appear to work in almost total political isolation which makes the quality of her Manifesto more remarkable, but it explains some of her frustrations. To work in isolation means you not only have no one to work and share your ideas with, you are isolated from the currents of thought that are around you and the existing channels to get your ideas out and about. You receive no feedback, sympathetic or otherwise, you have to develop all your ideas on your own. That seems to me the hardest way of doing things.

The thing about the film that erked me was that it concentrated far too much on Warhol and the Factory, from the title onwards. Acknowledging the limitations of the scope of a shortish film and that Solanas is most well known for her shooting of Warhol and that it was at least in part her frustration at his indifference to her play that contributed to her tipping over the edge, I was still interested in a film about Solanas and what her ideas were, how she came to write the manifesto.

The manifesto had little to do with her time with the Factory. How did she come to write it? Was it a satire of male writings, was it also supposed to be taken literally, or both? It just goes to show that you won't get a film made by Hollywood, or even BBC's Arena programme, based on the pitch "it's about this really intelligent women who wrote this manifesto about eradicating men and who was a really interesting character". But you may get a small budget film about "the mad woman who shot Andy Warhol".

The problem is film is not the way to make a documentary, which is I guess what I wanted. It has to survive on its merits as a piece of celluloid drama and I suppose it does that, just.

Carla's Song

Dir. Ken Loach
1996

For once I agree with Barry - it's a good film. Carla's Song is on a similar grand scale as Loach's Land and Freedom; instead of an epic of the Spanish Civil War, it 'does' Nicaragua. Robert Carlyle stars as George, the bus driver who falls for mysterious passenger Carla, who turns out to be a disturbed escapee from Nicaragua's Contra 'rebellion'. As George discovers more about Carla's past the two are inevitably drawn back into the Contra/Sandinista conflict. Once there, the FBI rears its ugly head - the portrayal of its part in creating and promoting barbarism is plausible but shocking to the uninitiated. Then it all starts getting pretty intense.

Apart from the time and place, the parallels with Land and Freedom are so clear it is virtually a sequel by type. Carla's Song is similarly (or more) realistic in terms of sets and general attention to detail, and again, top Hollywood actors are ditched in favour of local talent, giving performances with less polish and more rough edges - but all the more gritty for it.

The comparisons with L&F go on. Loach is no anarcho-syndicalist, and, having hugely underplayed the role of the anarcho-syndicalist CNT in the Spanish Civil War (while simultaneously drawing heavily on anarcho-syndicalist action and imagery), it is not surprising that this time the anarchist content is approximately zero.

Don't expect to find sturdy seedlings of anarchist activity - but do expect a vivid portrayal of the elements of social revolution typical of this national liberation style struggle. And, judging by my own experience elsewhere of modern low intensity wars involving grass roots struggle for national liberation - its realistic. It gives you a buzz. If you identified with L&F like this, you'll like it.

Oh, and watch out for the inevitable love story bits, which get a bit overbearing.